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## **Prayer is Powerful Force in this Nation**

*By Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning*

Thursday, May 5, 2011 marked this year's annual National Day of Prayer.

Prayer holds a powerful place in the history of our nation and in the lives of its leaders.

George Washington said in his presidential farewell address in 1796: *"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."* He was setting the stage for a new nation rooted in faith and prayer.

The first Continental Congress prayed for wisdom in forming a new nation when it met. President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a day of "humiliation, fasting and prayer" in 1863. In 1952, Congress enacted and President Harry Truman signed a law establishing a National Day of Prayer.

In July 2010, I took legal action with a 29-state coalition to defend the annual National Day of Prayer. Last month, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit dismissed a lawsuit claiming that the National Day of Prayer is unconstitutional. Prayer has always been and will always be a powerful force in this nation.

When George Washington had to lead his revolutionary troops into battle after suffering the roughest winter yet in Valley Forge – legend has it, he knelt down and prayed. Abraham Lincoln saw a nation torn apart by civil war, and when a preacher ventured to tell him the Lord was on Lincoln's side, he said:

*"The Lord is always on the side of the right, but it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lord's side."* Martin Luther King, Jr. saw a nation divided by racism and segregation. He endured threats to his family and his life and his response was to pray.

Every day, the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, the Nebraska Legislature and numerous other public bodies begin their work with a prayer. In this country thousands of local, state, and federal officials, military generals and other public servants start their days by kneeling humbly before the Lord – instead of expecting others to kneel before them.

This is what sets the United States apart from many nations.

What does prayer do for a leader? It inspires humility. The daily act of kneeling in prayer acknowledges a power greater than you – greater than those around you. Praying – by its very nature – reminds leaders that it is a privilege to serve, not to be served. And finally, it presents an opportunity to listen to the innermost longings of the soul.

Prayer is an important element to successful and responsible leadership in this nation, and I hope that never changes. A country is better off when its leaders are serving a power greater than themselves.

There is no better time for the citizens of our nation to unite in prayer. Our prayer will give strength and humility to leaders, resolve to nations and hope to our citizens.